

The International *Back to Back* Wool Challenge Story

In 1811 at Newbury in Berkshire, UK, a one thousand pound wager was made to make a coat from the sheep's back to a man's back in one day. Watched by 5000 people, the coat was completed in thirteen hours. The sheep was eaten with much quaffing of beer to celebrate.

Today's Challenge began in 1992 when Richard Snow, a keen young spinner at the Scottish Wool Centre at Aberfoyle in Scotland, developed thyroid cancer. His desire to raise funds for cancer research sparked off their **Back to Back Challenge**, a competition very similar to that run almost two hundred years ago. The event created enormous interest in the UK, not only because of the clever wool promotion but also because of the funds raised for cancer research.

That same year, Australia held a similar contest.

Teams representing football clubs The Cats, Geelong, Victoria and the West Coast Eagles, Western Australia competed in a race to spin & knit a football scarf from freshly shorn wool.

When Australian Wool Showcase member, Wendy Dennis took part in the 1994 Fourth World Congress on Coloured Sheep at York University, UK, she also visited the Scottish Wool Centre. With similar annual competitions held in Scotland and Australia, combined with fundraising for Cancer Research, the seed was sown for a combined International Competition and the rules were developed to suit.

Teams consist of a blade shearer, a sheep and seven handspinners & knitters. Team nominate time keepers, assessors & coordinators monitor each team competing at their own wool related venue. All teams follow the identical Challenge rules and pattern exactly as they are written.

The 1995 inaugural Challenge with nine teams competing from three Australian States, Scotland and the Shetland Isles, was won by the **Shetland Isles in 5 hours 57 mins 58 sec.** **Over 1,350 Pounds** was raised by the Scottish Wool Centre for the Cancer Research Campaign.

1996 saw twenty two teams competing, sixteen in Australia from four States. USA entered a team from Michigan and the UK had teams from Scotland, the Shetland Isles, Devon and Cambridge. Again, the Shetlands were unbeatable, breaking their blistering 1995 record by 39 minutes. They clipped another nine minutes off the next year. In 2004, **Merriwa**, New South Wales, Australia broke the 5 hour barrier. Their time:- **4 hours 51 minutes 14 seconds** is now in the *Guinness World Records* book. Merriwa also raised a record **\$15,000 for Cancer Research.**

Ireland, Wales, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Czech Republic & Republic of South Africa have since joined the Challenge.

In just a few short years, the Challenge has developed at a remarkable rate.

It is a simple and direct method of promoting wool from 'sheep's back to spinners back' using the ancient skills of blade shearing, spinning and knitting.

And it is timed to coincide with Australia's long weekend in June and the tourist summer season in the Northern Hemisphere

Can you knit a jumper in a day?
Blade Shears and Knitting Needles:
Watch them race against the clock.

The International Back to Back Wool Challenge Story (continued)

Record Times

World Record :-	4 hours 51 minutes 14 seconds	Merriwa, New South Wales, Australia 2004.
Australia Record :-	4 hours 51 minutes 14 seconds	Merriwa, New South Wales 2004.
UK Record:-	5 hours 9 minutes	Islesburgh, Shetland Isles 1997
Japan Record:-	5 hours 33 minutes 46 seconds	Hitsujkoubok Masako, Chibaken, 2006
Canada Record:-	5 hours 52 minutes 48 seconds	Toronto Spiders, Toronto, Ontario 2010
New Zealand Record:-	7 hours 5 minutes 24 seconds	Canterbury Combo, South Island. 2001.
Czech Republic Records:-	6 hours 52 minutes 10 seconds	Team One, Pelhrimov 2010.
USA Record:-	8 hours 33 minutes 31 seconds	Challenge Takers, Michigan. 1996.
Republic of South Africa	8 hours 13 minutes 40 seconds	Senekal Spinners Academy, Bloemfontein 2010.

Annual Fund Raising Record

\$15,000.00 to Cancer Research Merriwa, New South Wales, Australia 2004

Challenge Date Year 2012

Sunday 10th June on or before.

Trophy Sponsors of Perpetual Trophies

Scottish Wool Centre -	The winning team.
City of Geelong -	Winning Australian team.
Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Ltd -	The winning Canadian team.
Shipway Trophy -	For the winning New South Wales, Australia, team.
Brigadoon Trophy -	The team with the greatest donation to charity

For further information and Entry Forms, please contact:-

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International Wool Challenge metal badges are available from the above address.

For team members and organisers only.

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